



## Who Needs A Permit and Why?

The Seminole County Building and Fire Division is frequently asked about the how's and why's of permits. In this article I will answer some of these questions.

Q: Why do I need a permit to complete work on my own home?

A: The Florida Building Code requires a permit. The code does this to insure that permits are secured. This is the first step. Once the permit is issued, there are various inspections that are required throughout the duration of the work. Through these inspections, we have assurance that the codes being adhered to, and the buildings are safe for the public at large.

Q: What is the purpose of the Florida Building Code?

A: The code is the minimum standard to be used to construct buildings so as to provide for protection of safety, health and general welfare of the public.

Q: What happens if I choose not to secure the required permits?

A: You would be issued a notice of code violation. The penalty for such is double the permit fee. In addition, there may be costly fees for third party engineering analyses that could be required for areas of work that are concealed. You also leave yourself vulnerable to possible litigation if you ever decide to sell your home.

Q: Do I need a contractor?

A: Not if you own and occupy the house. State statutes allow the owners of real property to act as their own contractor. The exemption may only be used if you own and occupy the home. As an owner builder though, if you don't complete all of the work yourselves, you must supervise the work, and hire licensed trade subcontractors (electric, plumbing, a/c, and roof) in accordance with state law. Any person working on your building who is not licensed must work under your direct supervision and you are required to deduct F.I.C.A. and withholding tax, and provide workers compensation insurance. You cannot act as your own contractor for rental property.

Q: Do I need an architect and or an engineer?

A: Maybe. It all depends on what the proposed work is. Additions, sheds and the like would require an architect or engineer, where a wood fence would not.

Q: If I use a contractor, what guidelines should I use to choose one?

A: Ask for and check references, ask to see their state license, check to see that their license number is on their business card, and proposal, check their license number on the state web page([www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com)) for any state complaints, check your local building department to see if there are any local complaints against them. If they ask you to secure the permit, a red flag should pop up. They may not be licensed, which puts the homeowner totally at risk.